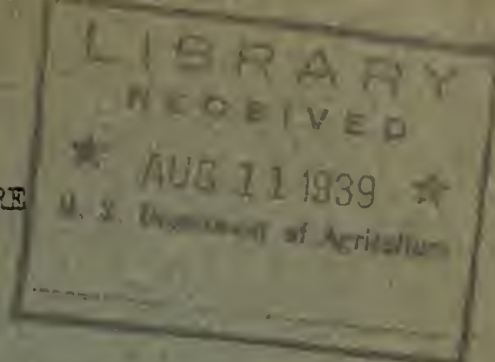


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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
SOIL CONSERVATION SERVICE  
Region Eight  
Albuquerque, New Mexico



Hugh G. Colkins  
Regional Conservator

VILLAGE DEPENDENCE ON MIGRATORY LABOR  
IN THE UPPER RIO GRANDE AREA

Regional Bulletin No. 47  
Conservation Economics Series No. 20  
July, 1937



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Wagework first became a factor in the livelihood of the Spanish-American village population of the Upper Rio Grande in about 1880. Prior to that time the people of the villages had been entirely dependent upon limited agricultural resources, principally the small patches of irrigated lands in the villages and the range lands immediately surrounding them. The building of the railroads in the 1880s provided the first significant opportunity for employment for the village population. The subsequent introduction and expansion of mining, lumbering and other non-agricultural activities in the area afforded a growing market for the surplus labor of the villages. From 1880 on, dependence upon wagework steadily increased, the bulk of the village population deriving its livelihood from the combination of irrigated land, range livestock, and seasonal wagework. The local custom of bequeathing land equally among all the children and the relatively infrequent occurrence of permanent migration out of the area contributed to the increasing dependence upon wagework. The monopolization of the greater part of the range lands by large commercial operators, restrictions on the use of National Forest lands, and the progressive depletion through over-use of the small part of the range lands of the area available to the village population effectively blocked what might have been the natural course of economic development for the



village population, a progressively extended use of the range lands of the area and an increasing, or at least not decreasing, dependence upon livestock raising for livelihood. So from 1880 on, more and more families obtained some part of their local income from wagework.

Until about 1900 the market for labor in the Upper Rio Grande area itself was large enough to provide for the village population. From 1900 on, however, wagework outside the area and outside the state became increasingly important. Non-agricultural activity in New Mexico had by that time passed its first period of expansion and development and the market for labor afforded by it was expanding less rapidly than the village population and village needs were increasing. About 1900 a small number of men began to go out of the state in search of seasonal employment. They found it easily enough in the expanding mine and smelter, lumbering, farming and ranching industries of Colorado, Wyoming, Utah, and other western states. The number who left the villages for work in these outside areas increased each year. The World War greatly accelerated agricultural and industrial activity and created a severe shortage of labor in the western states. In 1915 for the first time sugar and smelting companies actively recruited labor in New Mexico. From that time on large numbers of villagers migrated to other



western states each year for seasonal labor. The majority of village families became partially dependent upon wagework for livelihood, and the economy of the villages became definitely tied to the commercial business system of the rest of the United States. With the onset of the depression of 1929 the market for the marginal labor of the villages, with stunning suddenness, collapsed, leaving a broken-down and deficient village economy to be doctored as best it might by relief agencies.

It is now apparent that the palliatives offered by the relief agencies in the past 7 years can never become cures. Somewhat more heroic and at the same time rational measures must be applied if the village economy and the village population is to be salvaged. In any planning of the necessary adjustments the opportunities for employment now open and likely to be consistently open to the Spanish-American village population must be considered. Such consideration must involve:

1. Quantitative estimates of the number of workers who found employment each year over a period of years up to the present, both within and outside of the Upper Rio Grande area; and of the income obtained from this employment.

2. Similar estimates for the current year indicating the numbers obtaining work in different lines of activity, the wages and conditions of work obtaining in those lines of





activity, and the income derived therefrom.

3. The number of seasonal workers annually required to those lines of activity, the number of resident workers currently available in the labor-importing areas, the extent of the labor shortage, if any, in those areas, and the circumstances which require the importation of labor into those areas.

4. The prospects for future change in the labor requirements of the industries now importing labor.

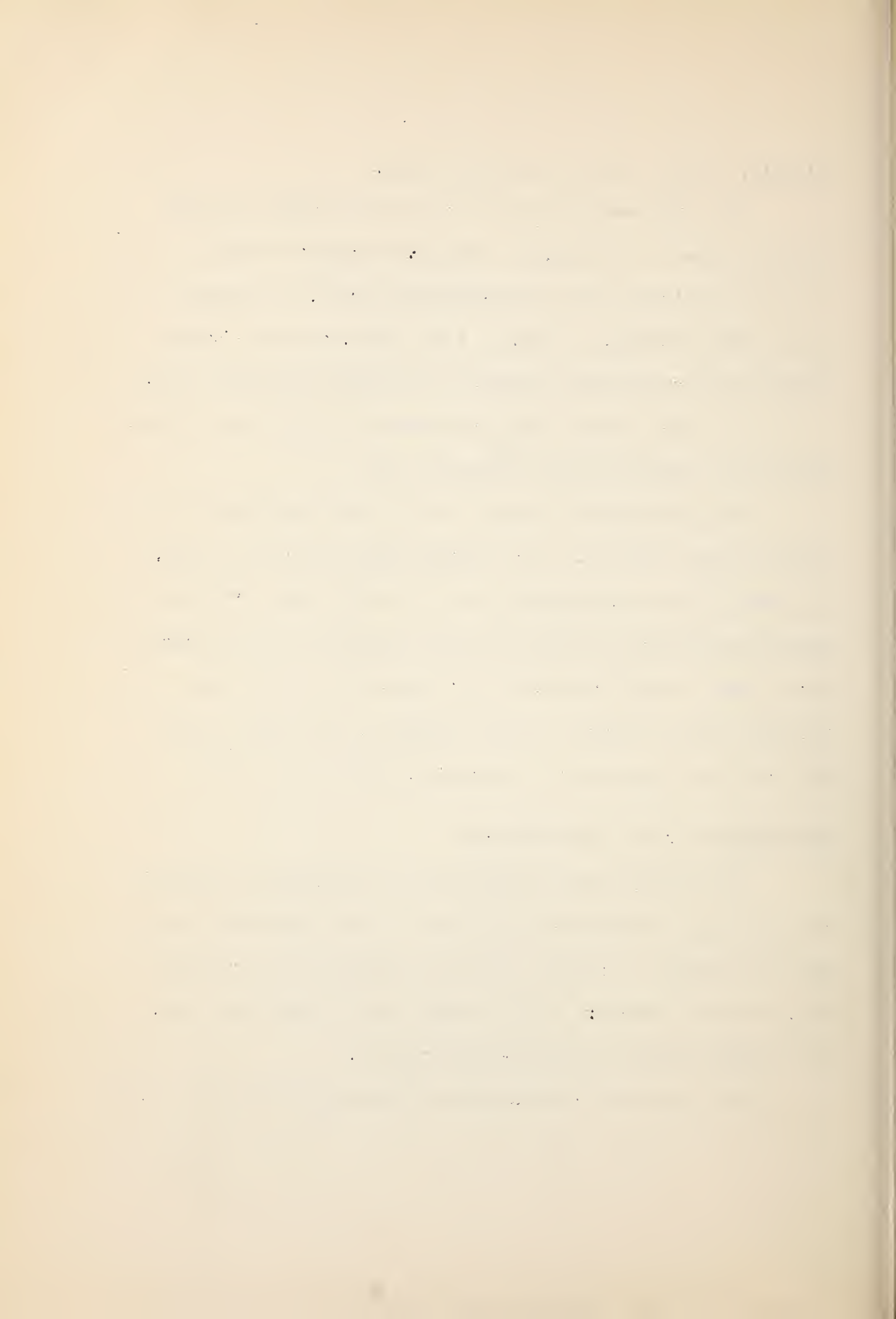
The information available on the points mentioned above is by no means complete. It is sufficiently adequate, however, to permit a generalized answer to the problem posed: "To what extent may wage-work in the near future contribute to the income of the rural population of the Upper Rio Grande area?" The following pages attempt to review briefly the pertinent available data and to present the conclusions which flow from it.

#### MIGRATIONS FOR LABOR PRIOR TO 1929

Relatively little information on the number of workers who once found employment in and outside of the Upper Rio Grande area is currently available. Such information as is available comes from two sources: a field survey in the Jemez-Tewa Area, and employing units in the out-of-state area.

The survey of Spanish-American villages in the Tewa Basin





Study indicates that out of 11 villages containing 1202 families, an average of 1,110 men went out of the villages to work for some part of each year prior to 1930. In 1934, the base year of the survey, only 157 men out of these 1202 families found work outside the villages. Approximately 90 men out of every 100 families in the Jemez-Tewa area, then, found seasonal employment each year prior to 1930. The rural Spanish-American population of the Jemez-Tewa area in 1930 was approximately 35,000 or some 7,000 families. On the basis of the above ratio it may be estimated that some 6,300 men living in the area found seasonal employment each year prior to 1930. Seasonal and other employment opportunities in this area are limited so that it is probable that the greater number of these migrated to other western states for labor.

Similarly precise data on the Middle Rio Grande and Puerco areas are not available. These two areas together contained in 1930 a rural Spanish-American population of approximately 35,000 or 7,000 families. Applying the ratio used above some 6,300 men out of these areas would have found employment for some part of each year prior to 1929. In these areas the opportunities for seasonal employment afforded by the city of Albuquerque and lumbering and livestock activities are greater than in the Jemez-Tewa area so that probably a smaller proportion



of the men obtaining work migrated out of the state for it.

An estimated total, then, of approximately 12,500 men out of the rural Spanish-American population of the three areas obtained seasonal employment each year prior to 1929. It is further estimated, on the basis of census data and general knowledge of employment opportunities within the Upper Rio Grande Area, that not less than 8,000 of these migrated to out-of-state areas for their jobs.

A rapid check with employing units and with the United States Employment Service in out-of-state areas provided the following information. Between 1924 and 1929 the Great Western Sugar Company imported from New Mexico an average of 2,500 workers for six months' labor in the beet fields of Colorado, Wyoming and Montana each year. Other sugar companies together are estimated to have imported an average of about 1,500 workers each year. Of the total 4,000, between 3,000 and 3,500 are estimated to have come out of the Upper Rio Grande area.

The Denver and Rio Grande Railroad reports that it imported between 1,000 and 1,500 men from New Mexico for work on track gangs in Colorado and Utah each year during the 1920s. All of these men, they report, were drawn from the Upper Rio Grande Area. No other railroad hired any significant number of Spanish-Americans from New Mexico.



The United States Employment Service estimates that each year during the 1920s between 2,500 and 3,500 men migrated from the Upper Rio Grande area for six months' work as sheepherders in Colorado, Wyoming and Montana.

Mines and smelters, principally those at Leadville and Pueblo, are estimated to have drawn between 500 and 700 men from the Upper Rio Grande area each year. The potato fields of the San Luis Valley, it is estimated, drew between 300 and 500 men from the Upper Rio Grande, in this case for only about one month's labor during the potato harvest. A few hundred are estimated to have obtained employment in other lines of activity.

In sum, these estimates indicate that roughly between 7,000 and 10,000 workers migrated each year from the villages of the Upper Rio Grande for labor in the beet fields, potato fields, mines and smelters, track gangs, and sheep camps of Colorado, Utah, Wyoming and Montana.





Table I

Estimated Average Number of Workers Migrating  
From Upper Rio Grande Area to other Western  
States for Seasonal Labor in 1920s

Activity	Estimated Numbers		
Sheepherding	2500	to	3000
Beet Fields	2000	to	3500
Railroads	1000	to	1500
Mines and Smelters	500	to	700
Other	300	to	500
Total	7300	to	9200

Compiled from data supplied by Great Western Sugar  
Company, and estimates of United States Employment  
Service.



## MIGRATIONS FOR LABOR, 1930 TO 1935

With the onset of the depression in 1929 productive activity and employment in almost all fields declined sharply. The acreage in sugar beets declined, maintenance work on railroads was allowed to lapse, and mines and smelters curtailed activity. Simultaneously employment in other activities in Colorado, Wyoming, Utah and Montana declined and large numbers of resident workers became available to meet the seasonal demand for labor which had formerly been met by Spanish-Americans from the Upper Rio Grande Area. In the years 1931, 1932, 1933, and 1934 no workers from New Mexico were imported for labor in the beet fields. Neither were there any importations for labor in mines and smelters. The number imported for labor as sheepherders fell to between 1,800 and 2,000. The number of New Mexicans who secured work on track gangs fell to less than 100. In all, in the years between 1930 and 1935 the number of workers migrating for labor from the Upper Rio Grande Area to other western states declined to between 1,800 and 2,500. The survey of Spanish-American villages in the Tewa Basin Study indicates, as mentioned above, that approximately 13 workers out of every 100 families obtained jobs in 1934 as opposed to the 90 out of every hundred who obtained jobs prior to 1929.



## MIGRATIONS FOR LABOR, CURRENT

The only information available on the current employment situation in the villages is that from the Human Dependency Survey of the Soil Conservation Service, which uses 1935 as its base year. A sample including the villages of the Abiquiu area, the Alcalde area, the Cuba area, Dixon, and Tijeras Canyon, and covering 1,449 consumption groups,\* indicates that in 1935 out of these 1,449 families 678 persons obtained employment, or 47 workers out of every 100 families. Of these 678 who obtained employment, 287 or 42 per cent obtained employment within the local area in which they lived. 189 or 28 per cent obtained employment outside their local areas but within the state of New Mexico. 202 or 30 per cent migrated for their jobs to other states.

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\*

A consumption group is defined as that group of persons habitually funding and sharing all income. Hereinafter the term "family" will be used in its place.



Table II

Employment in the Villages of the  
Abiquiu Area, Alcalde Area, Cuba Area,  
Dixon Area, and Tijeras Canyon

1935

Occupation	NUMBER OF PERSONS EMPLOYED			
	Total	In Local Area	In Other Areas of New Mexico	Out of State
Farm Hand	127	56	6	65
Shepherd	181	9	69	103
Cow Hand	8	3	5	0
Railroad Work	24	7	2	15
Mining	24	0	13	11
Odd Jobs	17	10	5	2
Housework	31	24	6	1
Retail Trade	53	49	4	0
Artisans	20	19	1	0
School Teachers	44	40	4	0
Federal Employees	16	11	3	2
State & County "	43	17	26	0
Lumbering and Sawmill	6	2	4	0
Truck Driver	3	0	3	0
Unskilled Labor	25	9	16	0
Miscellaneous	56	31	22	3
Total	678	287	189	202

Total number of consumption groups covered by survey - 1,449;  
Compiled from Human Dependency Survey of Soil Conservation Service.





As indicated by Table II, 14 workers out of every 100 families migrated out of the state for labor in 1935. On the basis of this ratio it may be estimated that the 14,000 Spanish-American rural families of the Upper Rio Grande Area sent 1,960 workers to other states for seasonal labor in 1935. Table II further indicates that the principal occupations in which migratory laborers from the Upper Rio Grande Area found employment in 1935 were shepherding, farm labor, railroad work, and mining, in the order named. Assuming our sample to be representative, it may be estimated that of the approximately 2,000 workers who secured jobs in other states approximately 1,000 worked as sheepherders, over 600 as farm laborers, almost 150 as railroad workers, 100 in mines and smelters, and approximately 100 in miscellaneous occupations. Many of those who worked as farm laborers worked in the potato harvest in the San Luis Valley. In 1935 the Sugar Beet companies imported a negligible amount of labor from New Mexico.

Further analysis of the data on workers who migrated to other states for labor indicates that each worker had an average of 4.8 man months of labor, and earned an average of \$181. The range was from an average of \$90 to 2.3 man months of labor by farm laborers to \$212 for 6.1 man months of labor by sheepherders. On the basis of this average it may be estimated that in 1935 approximately \$350,000 was earned by migratory laborers from the



Upper Rio Grande Area. It may be estimated roughly that prior to 1929 the average earnings per worker were one-third higher than at the present time, or approximately \$270 for the season. Using 8,500 as the average number of workers who went out of the area each year, it may be estimated that prior to 1929 over \$2,000,000 was earned each year by migratory laborers from the Upper Rio Grande Area.

Further data on out-of-state labor in the four principal fields into which New Mexico workers went is presented in the following pages.

#### OPPORTUNITIES FOR EMPLOYMENT IN THE SUGAR BEET INDUSTRY

Employment opportunities for migratory labor from New Mexico in the beet fields of Colorado, Wyoming, and Montana can be best evaluated against the background of the industry as a whole. Charges and counter-charges in regard to the industry have been made almost since its inception. It has achieved considerable notoriety for its use of child labor and has frequently been cited by impartial observers as outstanding in its exploitation of labor. The present review of the industry is designed neither to prove nor to disprove these charges, but to evaluate the opportunities for employment that it offers to labor of the Upper Rio Grande Area.



## History

The first profitable sugar beet factory in the United States was built at Alvarado, California in 1870. In 1890 domestic production of sugar was stimulated by an import tariff on sugar and from that time on domestic sugar production increased until at the present time Continental United States produces about 25 per cent of the sugar it uses, of which about 75 per cent is beet sugar. Between 1928 and 1932 an average of 717,000 acres of sugar beets were harvested in the United States, 291,000, or approximately 40 per cent in Colorado, Wyoming and Montana, 202,000 acres in Colorado alone. In these latter states sugar beet growing has been largely on irrigated lands, the bulk of them in reclamation projects. Sugar beets have been grown in northern Colorado since 1900. Sugar factories were erected at Loveland in 1901, at Eaton and Greeley in 1902, and at other localities since then. At the present time in Colorado, beets are grown and beet sugar is manufactured on the Western Slope, in the Arkansas Valley, and in northern Colorado. One company, which produces more than 80 per cent of all the beet sugar produced in Colorado and 45 per cent of all that produced in the United States, dominates the industry.

This company, the Great Western Sugar Company, was organized in 1905 with a capitalization of \$30,000,000, \$15,000,000





in common stock and \$15,000,000 in preferred stock. Only \$13,600,000 of stock was sold, all preferred stock, and with this capital the six sugar factories then operating in the area were acquired. No other capital was ever invested. From 1905 to 1930 a total of \$93,000,000 in cash dividends were paid, 7 per cent annually on the preferred stock and as high as 47 per cent in one year on the common stock. In addition, the accumulated assets of the company were valued in 1930 at \$88,000,000, indicating total profits in 25 years of \$167,000,000, or an average profit of almost 50 per cent per year on the initial investment.

#### Organization

Three other companies, the Holly Sugar Company, the National Sugar Corporation, and the American Crystal Sugar Company share with the Great Western Sugar Company the sugar beet industry in Colorado, Montana, and Wyoming. All operate under the same scheme of organization. The company dominates every phase of the industry, from the growing of beets to the sale of manufactured sugar. Beets are grown by two classes of farmers: those who own their farms and perhaps rent additional land, and those who rent only. The grower of either class operates as a part of a highly organized system in which the sugar beet company plays the dominant role. Beets are raised solely under



contract with the company. The company agrees to take all the beets raised on the contracted acreage, provided they come up to certain standards of condition and sugar content. The seed is supplied to the grower by the company at a regular price, usually 15 cents per pound. The beets are paid for according to a contract price based upon sugar content, and in some cases, upon the market price of sugar. The company regulates and advises the farmer in his methods of cultivation. The grower may contract only with the company doing business in his territory.

The grower as a rule depends upon the beet sugar company to furnish him with the labor necessary for the handwork on his acreage of beets. The company recruits the labor, assigns it to growers and exercises close supervision over it after placement on the grower's farm. The company plays a large part in the determination of the standard wage to be paid.

Thus in every aspect of the business, the farmer is not an independent producer, but is subject to the direction of the company. From such information as is available it appears that the grower has not profited excessively.

A study by the University of California entitled "Mexican Labor in the Valley of the South Platte, Colorado" <sup>(1)</sup> shows that in 1917, 57% of the beet growers were tenants, and that in 1927 67% were tenants.

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(1) "Mexican Labor in the United States", Vol. I, Part II, Dr. Paul S. Taylor.



Another source indicates that by 1931 the percentage of tenants had increased to 70, and that it is now between 72 and 75. The report mentioned above indicates a high rate of failures among beet growers, and shows that in 1927, 23% of the tenant growers were growing beets for the first time. A significant item in this connection is a public statement made to the effect that in the early 1920's the sugar company tried growing sugar beets directly. In spite of its tremendous resources, it abandoned beet growing as an unprofitable venture.

As was stated above, the grower depends upon the company for a supply of the cheapest labor possible. This the company supplies by resorting to a system of contract family labor. Under this system, the head of the family contracts to supply all the hand labor for a certain acreage of beets. Per-acre wage payments are so low, approximately \$19 in 1936, that in order to obtain a minimum livelihood the labor of an entire family, including children, is necessary. The average grown person can care for from 6 to 10 acres, but the contracts are generally made for from 25 to 35 acres, so that the contractor actually contracts the labor of his entire family. Each spring the sugar companies estimate the amount of labor required, the amount of labor available in the growing areas, and the additional amount which must be imported. Labor recruiting agents are then





sent into Texas, New Mexico, and to the Mexican border, to recruit a sufficient number of families to meet the estimated labor requirement. Families with large numbers of children are preferred. The company acts as intermediary between the farmer and such families, providing the contract which stipulates the handwork the family is to do and the rate to be paid per acre. The contract laborer bases his estimate of the acreage he can handle on the number of children he has who can be put to work. Since 1935, however, a clause in the AAA contract has barred the employment of children under 14, and has restricted the working day for children between 14 and 16 years to 8 hours. No enforcement provisions exist.

#### Labor Requirements and Labor Supply

The total harvested acreage in sugar beets in Colorado, Montana, and Wyoming from 1931 to 1936 varied between 234,000 and 329,000 acres, averaging over the six-year period 282,000 acres, as indicated in Table III.

Table III

Harvested Acreage in Sugar Beets in Colorado  
Montana, and Wyoming, 1931 to 1936.

	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935	1936	Average 1931-36
Colorado	224,000	156,000	209,000	169,000	142,000	171,000	179,000
Montana	54,000	54,000	68,000	64,000	51,000	60,000	58,000
Wyoming	49,000	40,000	52,000	42,000	41,000	44,000	45,000
Total	327,000	250,000	329,000	275,000	234,000	275,000	282,000





The average acreage in Colorado over the six years was 179,000, or slightly more than the 1936 acreage of 171,000. A certain proportion of this acreage is worked by the growers themselves. This proportion varies from area to area, but studies by the Colorado Agricultural College, and information supplied by the United States Employment Service indicate that over the entire state approximately 30 per cent of the acreage is worked by the growers and their families, and 70 per cent by labor. In the years 1931 to 1936, according to the estimates, an average of approximately 125,000 acres in Colorado were worked by labor. It is estimated that each worker may work an average of 7 acres. The number of workers required in the average year, on the basis of these estimates, must have approximated 18,000. Another estimate by the United States Employment Service, based on field counts, placed the number of beet-field laborers in 1936 between 17,000 and 19,000.

The need for these laborers exists only during the six months of the beet-growing season. No industry exists in the area which can absorb thousands of beetworkers during the other 6 months of the year. Thus, when during the World War sugar beet acreage expanded considerably and the number of unemployed local workers was reduced to a minimum the need for the seasonal importation of a large labor force became pressing. Each year thereafter



a certain number of the families imported from Old and New Mexico remained in or near the beet-growing areas. Many of them, during the winter move into nearby towns and into Denver and attempt to find jobs or some other source of income to supplement their earnings in the beet fields. Studies of earnings in the beet fields indicates that between \$200 and \$400 is the average family earning per season. A study of "Beet Workers on Relief in Weld County, Colorado" in 1935 indicated average earnings of \$289 per family for an entire season's work. Another study in 1924 in the Arkansas Valley showed that with a contract price of \$23 per acre the average earnings of contract families were \$453, though half the families earned less than \$400. The contract price in 1936 was \$19.50 per acre. The need for supplementation of beet-field earnings is made clear by these figures.

As indicated above, however, the opportunities for employment during the off-season are limited. They are particularly limited for Spanish-American and Mexican workers, by reason of labor experience, and social prejudice. Consequently, for many of the beet workers, relief has been the only resort during the winter. Relief agencies estimate on the basis of sample studies that during the past 5 years 60 to 70 per cent of all beetworkers have received relief for three to six months of each year. The



practice of the relief agencies has been to stop relief to all Spanish-speaking cases who have beet-field experience at the opening of the beet-work season. In 1936 beet-field experience was not required as justification. Thus, to recapitulate, the Spanish-speaking beet-working families work in the beet fields during the 6-month season. Earnings are so low that they must obtain supplementary income during the next 6 months. But opportunities for other employment either do not exist or are closed to Spanish-speaking workers. Most of them are, therefore, obliged to resort to relief. As soon as the next beet-working season opens, relief to Spanish-speaking families is stopped. To continue to live they must once more obtain jobs in the beet-fields. Almost no avenue of escape from beet-field labor is open to these families.

It is estimated on the basis of census data that 60,000 Mexicans, including Spanish-Americans, live in Colorado, 25,000 of them in the beet-growing areas. Almost all of the latter and a large proportion of the former number are in beet-working families. It is evident that there is resident in the state of Colorado, and in the local beet-growing areas a large supply of labor available for work in the beet fields. The United States Employment Service, on the basis of careful survey of its own





records and those of relief agencies, estimates that a minimum of 25,000 qualified, experienced, and able workers over 14 years of age are available in the State of Colorado for work in the beet fields. This estimate is regarded as conservative. The officials of the Employment Service state that if the contract price for labor were raised to \$25 per acre several thousand additional workers would make themselves available for beetfield labor.

As indicated in Table III above the harvested acreage in sugar beets in Montana and Wyoming in 1936 is 104,000, which was almost precisely the average acreage over the six years from 1931 to 1936. Assuming that in these states some 70 per cent of the acreage, or 73,000 acres, is worked by labor, approximately 10,500 workers were required in 1936. No information is available on the local labor supply resident in those states. United States Employment Service officials state that between 2,500 and 3,500 men were imported into those states in 1936, but that the actual labor shortage in those states was something less than that number, and probably did not exceed 2,000. The sugar beet acreage in Utah has not been discussed, because, according to officials of the United States Employment Service, the labor supply available for beet field work in that state is more than ample.

To summarize: the approximate number of workers required



to work the present beet acreage is in Colorado 18,000, and in Montana and Wyoming 10,500. The approximate number of available resident beet workers is, in Colorado 25,000, and in Montana and Wyoming 8,000. The total number of workers required is approximately 28,500. The total number available in the beet-growing states themselves is approximately 33,000.

In 1936, nevertheless, 2,500 workers from New Mexico were imported into Colorado, Montana and Wyoming. It is estimated that 1,000 worked in Colorado and 1,500 went into Montana and Wyoming along with approximately 1,500 Colorado workers. In 1937, with only a slight increase in beet acreage, it is estimated that 3,500 workers were imported from New Mexico, 500 into Colorado and 3,000 into Montana and Wyoming. Between 1,000 and 2,000 Colorado workers, in addition, were imported into Montana and Wyoming. Of those imported from New Mexico approximately 1,500 are estimated to have come from the rural sections of the Upper Rio Grande Area.

It has been stated by officials of the United States Employment Service that workers have frequently been imported when a local supply was available. It has been charged by the State Federation of Labor and the Agricultural Workers Union that excess workers are imported by the Sugar companies in order to create



an over-supply and to depress wages. The sugar companies have stated that their estimates of labor available and needed cannot be exact and that they must, to be safe, err only on the upward side. They state also that Colorado workers are not always willing to accept work in the beet fields. Officials of the United States Employment Service confirm the latter statement: Colorado workers are not always willing to accept work in the beet fields at the current wage rate.

Leaving aside any question of motive on the part of the sugar companies it is clear that (a) there is in the three states a surplus number of workers available for beet field work; (b) the net effect of the importation of additional workers from New Mexico and Texas is to create a larger surplus and to permit the payment of a lower wage than might otherwise be possible. Assuming that the artificial depression of wages through importation of a surplus labor supply is considered undesirable, there appear to be, in the light of these facts, no actual opportunities for employment open to New Mexico workers in the beet fields of other western states.

Two other factors remain to be considered: possible future changes in beet acreage, and possible future mechanization of operations in the beet fields now performed by hand labor.

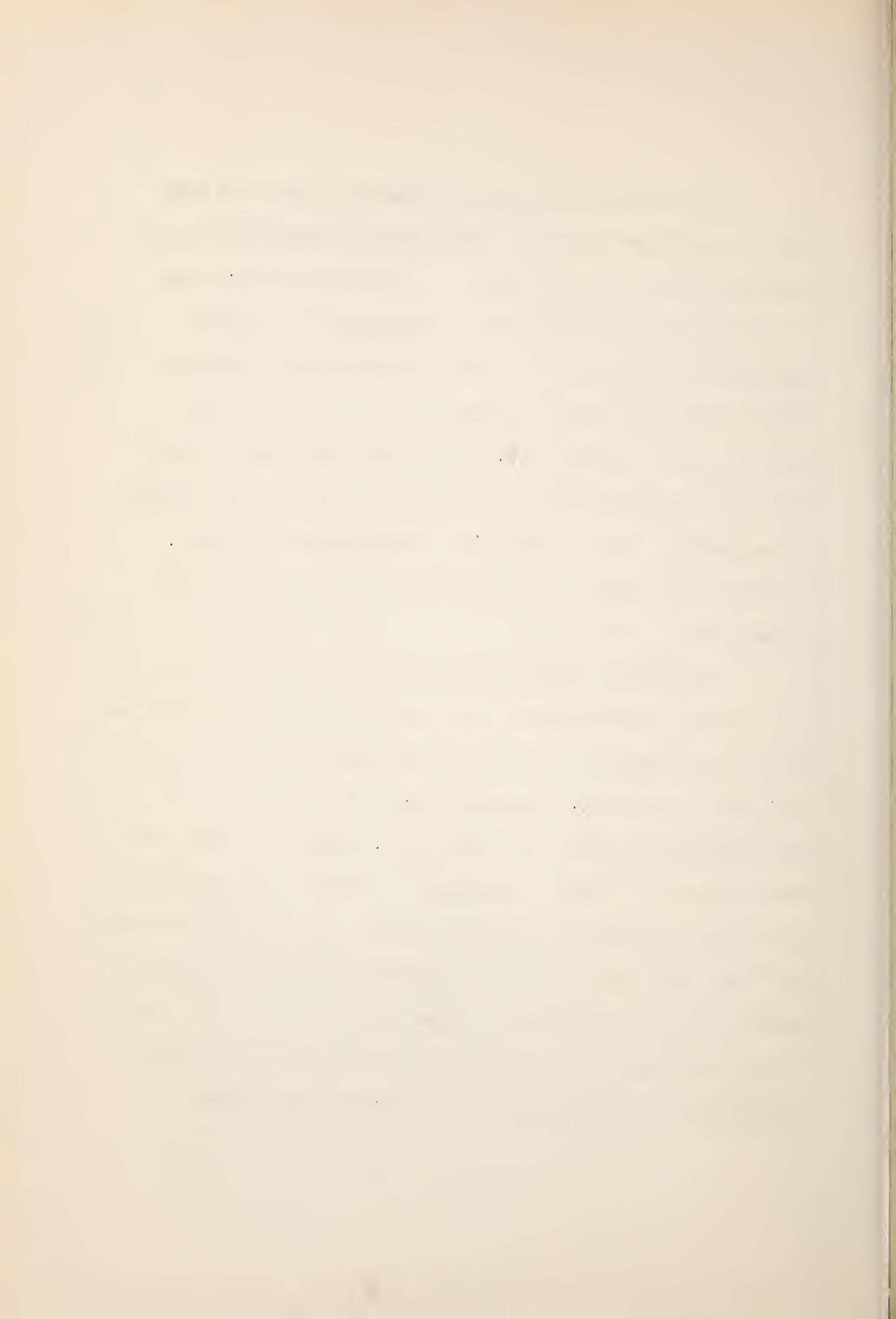




A bill to establish sugar production quotas for each state is now before Congress. Officials of the sugar companies predict that its net effect will be an increase in sugar beet acreage over the next five years. Officials of government agencies in Colorado, familiar with the sugar beet industry, predict confidently that no increase in acreage will result from the pending legislation. It is a fact that quotas higher than actual production have been set in the past without resulting in increased acreage in beets. It seems more probable, therefore, that sugar-beet acreage will not be increased over the next five years.

According to officials of the sugar companies, considerable progress has been made in the past few years in the development and perfection of mechanical substitutes for hand labor in beet-field operations. Intensive work is in progress and is being encouraged by the sugar companies. According to the Labor Commissioner of the Great Western Sugar Company, the introduction of mechanical devices is likely to result within the next 5 years in a 5 per cent decrease in the amount of labor required for the present beet acreage, within the next ten years in a 10 or perhaps 15 per cent decrease. As indicated above the number of workers required for the present acreage is approximately 28,500.





A 5 per cent decrease would eliminate the need for 1,425 workers, and a 10 per cent decrease, for 2,850 workers. Thus, even were there a legitimate need for the importation of 2,500 to 3,500 New Mexico workers in the beet fields, the advance of mechanization would within 10 years eliminate that need.

#### OPPORTUNITIES FOR LABOR IN THE LIVESTOCK INDUSTRY

Relatively little data is available on the migration of labor from the Upper Rio Grande for work as sheepherders in Colorado, Montana, and Wyoming. For many years it has been the practice for large sheep operators in those states to employ Spanish-American sheepherders from the Upper Rio Grande Area in New Mexico. It is reported that to a large extent the same people or their relatives secure these jobs year after year. The livestock companies send for them, paying their transportation; in early April and they work until some time in November, approximately 7 months.

As has been noted above, the decline in the number of sheepherders imported from New Mexico during 1930 to 1935 was relatively slight, from between 2,500 and 3,000 to between 1,800 and 2,000. The U. S. Employment Service in Colorado estimates that in 1937 approximately 2,400 men migrated from New Mexico, almost all of them from the Upper Rio Grande Area, for work as sheepherders in



the three states. 400 are estimated to have gone into Colorado, 800 into Montana, and 1,200 into Wyoming.

Sheepherding is an occupation requiring considerable experience and skill. The number of workers in the western states equipped with the requisite skill and experience appears to be limited, with a large number of them Spanish-Americans resident in New Mexico. The wages paid to sheepherders in Colorado, Montana and Wyoming are consistently higher than those paid in New Mexico, \$40 to \$50 per month plus board, as opposed to \$30 per month in New Mexico. Relative to the wages paid to beet-field workers, also, sheepherding wages are high: \$280 to \$350 plus board for the work of one man for 7 months, as opposed to \$200 to \$400 for the work of an entire family for 6 or 7 months. It seems likely that the number of workers available for labor as sheepherders in the three states is actually less than the number required. Between 1930 and 1935 a certain number of qualified workers resident in the area probably became available as a result of unemployment in other higher-paying occupations. At the present time some of these have probably been reabsorbed in their preferred lines of activity and the shortage of qualified sheepherders probably again approximates 2,400, the number estimated to have been imported from New Mexico in 1937.



The number of sheep on the range in Colorado, Montana  
(1)  
and Wyoming, according to the Department of Agriculture, dropped  
from 9,075,000 in 1930 to 8,481,000 in 1936. As sheep bands are  
ordinarily herded in those states three men are required to herd  
a band of 2,500 sheep. Calculating on this basis the 2,400  
herders imported from New Mexico care for 2,000,000 of the  
8,500,000 sheep in the three states. Efforts are now going  
forward to achieve control of the ranges and to reduce the  
number of livestock to the range carrying capacity. If a 20  
per cent reduction in the number of sheep on the ranges of the  
three states should be achieved the number of herders required  
would be reduced by slightly over 2,000. It may be fair to  
assume that the herders imported from New Mexico are in terms  
of distance from the area of employment and consequent transpor-  
tation cost to the employer, a marginal labor force which would  
be the first to feel reduction in numbers employed. If this  
assumption is made it may be seen that a 20 per cent reduction  
in numbers of sheep on the range would eliminate over 80 per  
cent of the number of herders currently imported from New Mexico.  
It may be, however, that at least in some areas, New Mexicans  
compete on an almost equal footing, in terms of distance from  
residence to job. It may be, also, that a 20 per cent reduction

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(1) Agricultural Statistics, 1936.





in numbers of sheep on the range will not occur in the near future, so that a sizable number of jobs in this field will remain open to workers from the Upper Rio Grande Area for some time to come.

#### OPPORTUNITIES FOR LABOR ON RAILROADS

Labor has been migrating into Colorado for seasonal work on railroad track gangs for many years. According to the Threlkeld Commissary in Denver, which is the employment agency for the Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad Company, and from which all the information presented on this subject was obtained, nearly all of this work has been for the Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad Company. The Burlington Railroad Company and the Union Pacific Railroad Company import considerable labor into Colorado and Utah but they hire it in Kansas City and other points from which it may be transported on their own lines. The Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad has in recent years preferred to hire "white" labor, although formerly it hired large numbers of Spanish-Americans and Mexicans.

According to the Threlkeld Commissary an average of close to 1000 men were imported by it from the Upper Rio Grande Area each year during the 1920's. An additional smaller number were hired by the Santa Fe Railroad. Most of these workers boarded trains at Espanola, Embudo, and nearby points, with transportation



passes sent down by the employment agency. Their addresses give further indication that they lived in the Upper Rio Grande area.

Between 1930 and 1935 so many workers were available locally that few passes were sent to New Mexico and very few workers from New Mexico secured jobs. This year, 1937, approximately 150 men have been imported on transportation passes furnished by the company. An additional 50 to 60 men have come up on their own and have obtained jobs. According to the employment agent there are jobs available for 200 to 300 more men, but quite a number of the passes sent this year to men in New Mexico were returned with some explanation as to why the recipients could not come this year. The employment agent supposed that WPA jobs were the actual reason.

This type of employment is open for about 6 months, from April to October, or November. Fewer men are employed in the early and late months of the season since cold and snow in those months prevent work on the mountain sections of the railroad. Wages are 25 cents per hour for a 10-hour day. Time and one-half is paid for overtime or Sunday work. Weekly earnings approximate \$19 since the usual working week is 7 days. From this 93 cents per day or \$6.51 per week is deducted for board and a small amount for another fee charged by the company, leaving



approximately \$12 per week as the wage received.

No estimate of the total number of men hired for this work by the Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad is available, beyond the fact that the 200 men who migrated from the Upper Rio Grande Area constitute a relatively small proportion of the total. According to the employment agent there are likely to be from 200 to 400 jobs open for residents of the Upper Rio Grande Area each year for some time to come.

#### OPPORTUNITIES FOR LABOR IN THE POTATO FIELDS OF THE SAN LUIS VALLEY

Potatoes are grown on 10 per cent of the irrigated crop lands in the San Luis Valley. This, however, does not indicate their actual importance in the economy of that valley, as they represent over 50 per cent of the total value of all crops grown. Practically all the New Mexico labor employed in the San Luis Valley is employed in the potato fields during the harvest, and only this wagework will be discussed in this report.

It was found, upon investigation, that the labor situation in the potato fields differed from the situation in the beet fields in only one essential respect. The beet field wagework, lasting 6 or 7 months, pays enough in wages to induce families to settle in the beet areas, even though they have nothing else





to depend upon. Potato field work, on the other hand, lasts only one month at best, and hence no resident supply of labor, depending entirely on this work, has been built up in the small local potato-growing areas. Within the boundaries of the entire San Luis Valley, however, there is a labor supply adequate to handle the potato harvest. In other respects such as the low wages paid, the use of entire families, and the importation of a surplus of labor, there is a strong similarity between the two industries.

Potato growing in the San Luis Valley is a highly speculative and heavily financed business enterprise. If the crop is good and the price high, the farmers make a "killing", but this happy situation rarely obtains. During four years out of five, the crop is poor, or the price is low, and the potato growers barely meet fixed charges. As is usually the case in such a situation, the labor set-up is geared to the poorest years. Grower prosperity is only slightly reflected in the wage paid to labor, but grower difficulties are fully reflected in the wage scale. To illustrate: the gross income from potatoes to San Luis Valley growers increased some 300% from 1935 to 1936, but wages of the potato pickers increased only 33%.

Approximately 38,000 acres in the San Luis Valley are



planted in potatoes by some 1,200 farmers. About 800 of these farmers each hire an average of 5 extra laborers during the harvest. Thus, some 4,000 extra hands are employed in the San Luis Valley during the potato harvest. Practically all of this extra labor is hired on a contract basis. The method usually employed is as follows: the grower, either himself or through the Potato Growers Association, will contact a potato contractor who will contract to pick all the grower's potatoes at from 4 to 8 cents per sack. This price depends to a certain extent on the market price of potatoes, the production per acre, and on the supply of cheap labor. The contractor is usually, though not always, a resident Spanish-American. It is then up to him to get together his crew, or crews if he has more than one contract. This crew will usually include the contractor's family and whatever transient labor he can pick up. The usual crew is made up of 7 people--5 pickers and two sack men. It will pick from 400 to 600 sacks of potatoes per day, averaging about 500 sacks. If the crew is a single family, or if the contractor is merely one of a group, then the amount earned goes to the entire group or is divided equally. Very often the contractor merely hires his labor, paying \$2.00 to \$2.50 and board per man per day. Most of the people who go into the potato harvest from New Mexico



are hired in this manner.

This particular contract system has developed because the potato farmers have no central agency on which they can depend for a supply of cheap labor. The contractor sometimes clears \$10 to \$20 per day on his contract after he pays his crew. Of the 4,000 harvest laborers employed in October, from 80 to 90 per cent are Spanish-Americans. Of the 3,200 to 3,600 Spanish-Americans, some 3,000 to 3,400 are residents of the San Luis Valley, though not of the potato area. They are small landholders living in the old Spanish-American villages along the edges of the valley, and laborers from Alamosa and other towns in the valley itself. Some 200 of the Spanish-American laborers come into the Valley from northern New Mexico. The 300 or so non-Spanish-American harvest hands are Texas and Oklahoma transient agricultural laborers. These latter also work on the truck farms of the area. Most of the New Mexico laborers are single men who hire out to contractors at \$2.00 or \$2.50 and board per day.

From 1931 through 1935, the resident labor in the San Luis Valley was more than adequate to care for the short crops. In 1935 there was a surplus of labor, and United States relief agencies continued to furnish employment to several hundred persons through the potato harvest. The wages paid pickers were





not considered sufficient by the WPA officials to warrant dropping relief clients wholesale. In 1936, the pickers' wages were raised from 5¢ to 8¢ per sack, and close to 800 men were cut from the relief rolls during potato harvest. The reason for this was that an emergency developed when an early frost threatened widespread destruction of the potato harvest. Men were able to earn up to \$4 per day that year.

At the present time, according to the United States Employment Service there are within the San Luis Valley slightly over 4,300 unemployed laborers qualified for work in the potato fields. A labor force of 4,000 can harvest the usual crop. It appears, therefore, that here, as in the beet fields, there is actually no legitimate opportunity for employment open to migrants from the Upper Rio Grande Area in New Mexico.



## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

1. Since the 1880's the rural Spanish-American population of the Upper Rio Grande Area <sup>(1)</sup> has been partially and increasingly dependent upon wagework for a portion of its livelihood. The opportunities for employment open to this population were at a peak during the 1920's. Sample surveys indicate that during that decade 90 workers out of every 100 families obtained jobs, most of them seasonal in character. It is estimated that approximately 12,500 workers out of the 14,000 rural Spanish-American families in the area obtained jobs each year of that decade. Not more than 4,500 worked in either their local area or other areas within the State of New Mexico. Between 7,000 and 10,000 migrated each year to Colorado, Montana, and Wyoming for seasonal labor. The bulk of the migratory laborers worked as sheepherders, in the beet fields and on railroad track gangs; between 2,500 and 3,300 as sheepherders, between 2,000 and 3,500 as beetworkers, and between 1,000 and 1,500 as railroad workers. The total

(1)

Here defined as the three areas of primary consideration; The Jemez-Tewa, the Puerco, and the Middle Rio Grande Area; roughly that portion of the Upper Rio Grande Watershed lying between Elephant Butte Lake and the Colorado line.



amount earned by these migratory workers is estimated to have been over \$2,000,000 per year.

2. With the onset of the depression in 1929 productive activity and employment in all fields declined. The amount of labor needed in all the lines of employment which had previously absorbed New Mexicans decreased, though less in the livestock industry than in the others. Simultaneously the amount of resident labor available for these types of employment increased.

In the six years, 1930 to 1935, the number of workers migrating annually from the Upper Rio Grande Area declined to between 1800 and 2,500. Surveys indicate that during those years only 13 workers out of every 100 families obtained jobs. The total amount earned by the migratory workers during this period is estimated to have approximated \$350,000 per year.

3. In 1936 and 1937 a larger number of workers found seasonal employment outside the area. In 1937 approximately 1500 workers migrated from the Upper Rio Grande Area for labor in the beet fields. (Close to 2,000 additional workers from other sections of New Mexico were also imported for beet-field labor.) Approximately 2,400 workers migrated from the





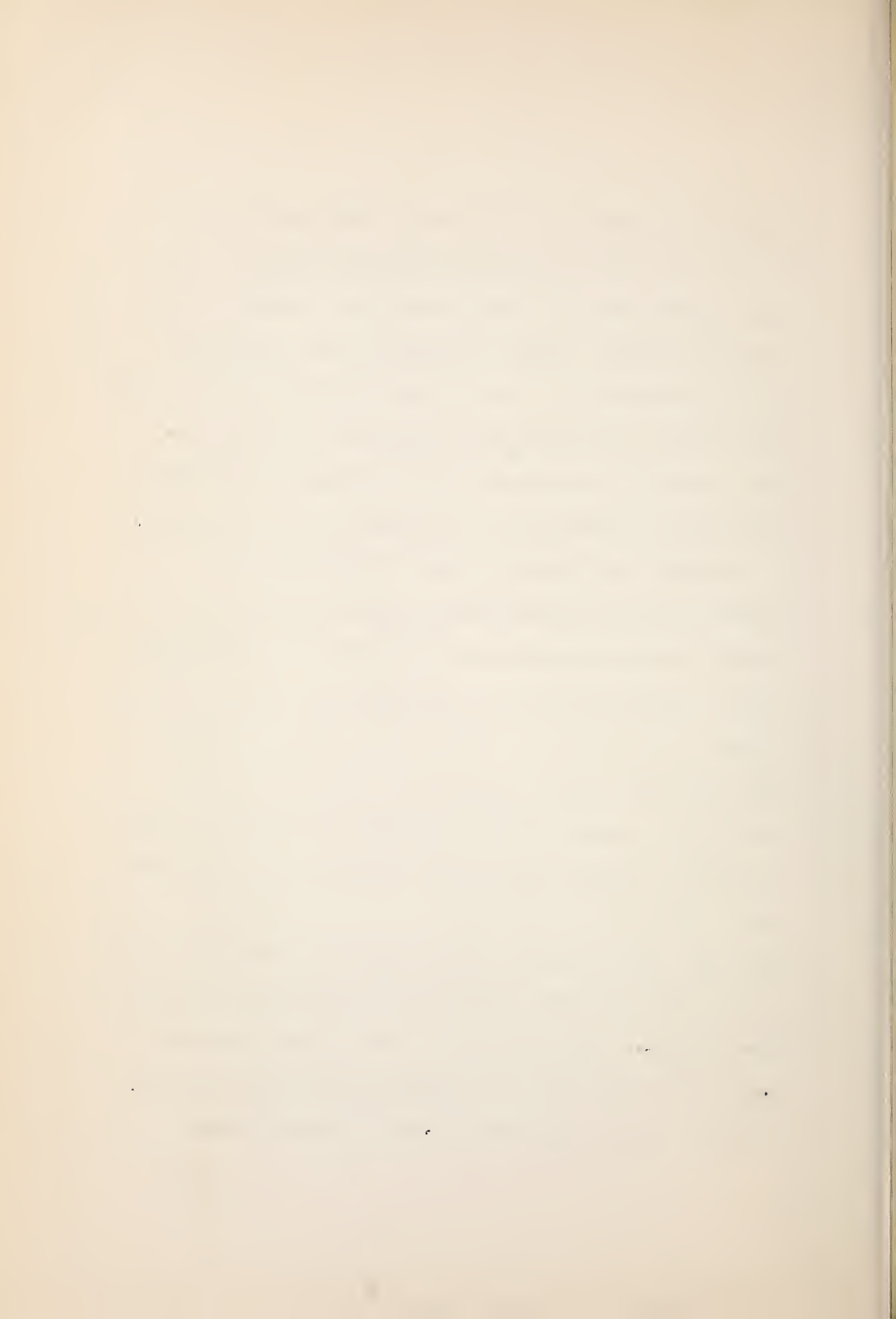
Upper Rio Grande for work as shepherders, and 200 for work on railroad track gangs. It is estimated that a total of between 4,100 and 4,500 workers from the Upper Rio Grande Area will have obtained seasonal employment in other western states in 1937, and will earn a gross total of almost \$1,000,000.

4. Investigation of the industries and areas in which migratory laborers from the Upper Rio Grande Area obtain jobs indicates, however, that the number of jobs legitimately open and available now and likely to be open and available in the future to New Mexico workers is much less than 4,100 to 4,500.
5. There are now in the three states containing the labor-importing beet-growing areas, Colorado, Montana, and Wyoming, approximately 33,000 resident workers qualified and available for beet-field labor. The number required to work the present acreage in beets is approximately 28,500. A surplus of 4,500 workers, or more than the number annually imported from New Mexico, thus exists. The net effect of the importation of workers from New Mexico is to further increase the surplus labor supply and to depress the labor market, making possible the payment of a lower wage for beet-field work than would



otherwise be possible. Wages in the beetfields are now so low that the labor of an entire family for the six or seven month season ordinarily earns between \$200 and \$400, barely enough to provide a minimum livelihood during the season. In the off-season 60 per cent of the beetworkers are dependent upon relief. New Mexico workers evidently are obliged to seek beet-field labor because of the scarcity of resources and lack of opportunities for employment in their home area. A plan which would consider labor in the beetfields a resource available to New Mexico workers would express a policy of encouraging excessive wage-cutting and consequent special subsidies to the beet sugar companies through partial federal support of their labor supply. It may be assumed that the latter policy is undesirable and that therefore there are no opportunities for employment in the beet fields actually and legitimately open to residents of the Upper Rio Grande Area.

Even were there no surplus of resident labor available in the beet-growing areas the mechanization in the next 10 years of operations now performed by hand labor in the beet fields would reduce the number of laborers required by 10 per cent, approximately the number now imported from New Mexico.



6. The 2,400 workers who migrate from the Upper Rio Grande Area for jobs as sheepherders fill an actual shortage of qualified labor existent in other western states. The current governmental efforts to secure range control may, however, lead to reduction in the number of sheep on the range. A 20 per cent reduction in the number of sheep on the range in Colorado, Montana, and Wyoming, would eliminate the need for 2,000 sheepherders, or 80 per cent of the number currently imported from New Mexico. If it is assumed that only a 10 per cent reduction in livestock numbers will be accomplished within the next 10 years, then only 1,400 jobs will be open to the marginal labor force now imported from New Mexico.
7. A larger number of resident workers are available for the potato harvest in the San Luis Valley than are required. As in the case of the beetfields, therefore, it may be concluded that no jobs are open to labor from the Upper Rio Grande Area.
8. In sum, over the next ten years, assuming a policy of not encouraging the concentration of a surplus labor supply in the beet or potato fields, and assuming a 10 per cent reduction in the number of sheep on the range in Colorado, Utah and Wyoming, the following employment opportunities will





be available to migratory workers from the Upper Rio Grande Area: 1,400 jobs as shepherders, 300 as railroad workers, 100 jobs in mining and other activities, or a total of 1,800 jobs. Assuming earnings of \$300 per season by each worker, the total gross earnings by these migratory laborers would be approximately \$500,000.

9. Approximately 4,500 jobs appear to be currently available within the State of New Mexico to residents of the Upper Rio Grande Area. This number appears not to have varied measurably in recent years and may not vary over the next 10 years. Total gross earnings from these jobs are estimated to approximate \$800,000.
10. The total number of jobs likely to be available to the rural Spanish-American population of the Upper Rio Grande over the next 10 years is therefore estimated at 6,300. It is estimated that total gross earnings from these jobs will approximate \$1,300,000 annually.



## A NOTE ON SOURCES

Information contained in this report was obtained from interviews with officials of various public and private organizations, from unpublished material in the files of those agencies, and from various published reports.

Information was obtained by interviews chiefly with the following officials, and from the records of their organizations:

Mr. L. V. Maddux, Labor Commissioner of the Great Western Sugar Company

Mr. J. A. Des Georges, Labor Recruiting Agent for the Great Western Sugar Company in New Mexico

Mr. Amer Lehman, Director of National Reemployment Service for Colorado

Mr. Olaf Larson, Colorado State Supervisor of Rural Research, Works Progress Administration

Manager of the Threlkeld Commissary, Employment Agency for the Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad Company

Officials of District Offices of the Works Progress Administration, and of the State Employment Service

Officials of the Agricultural Workers Union



The following publications have been drawn upon and consulted:

AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS, U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, 1936.

MEXICAN LABOR IN THE UNITED STATES, Vol. I, Part II, "Valley of the South Platte, Colorado", Paul S. Taylor, June, 1929.

BEEFWORKERS ON RELIEF, Research Bulletin No. 4, Cooperative Plan of Rural Research, Colorado State Agricultural Experiment Station and Rural Section, Division of Social Research, W. P. A.

CHILDREN WORKING ON FARMS IN CERTAIN SECTIONS OF NORTHERN COLORADO, Bulletin of the Colorado State Agricultural College, 1926.

MIGRATORY FARM LABOR IN THE UNITED STATES, Paul S. Taylor, from the Monthly Labor Review of the Bureau of Labor Statistics, U. S. Dept. of Labor, March, 1937.

CHILD LABOR IN AGRICULTURE AND FARM LIFE IN THE ARKANSAS VALLEY OF COLORADO, B. H. Mautner and W. S. Abbott, Bulletin of the Colorado State Agricultural College, 1929.



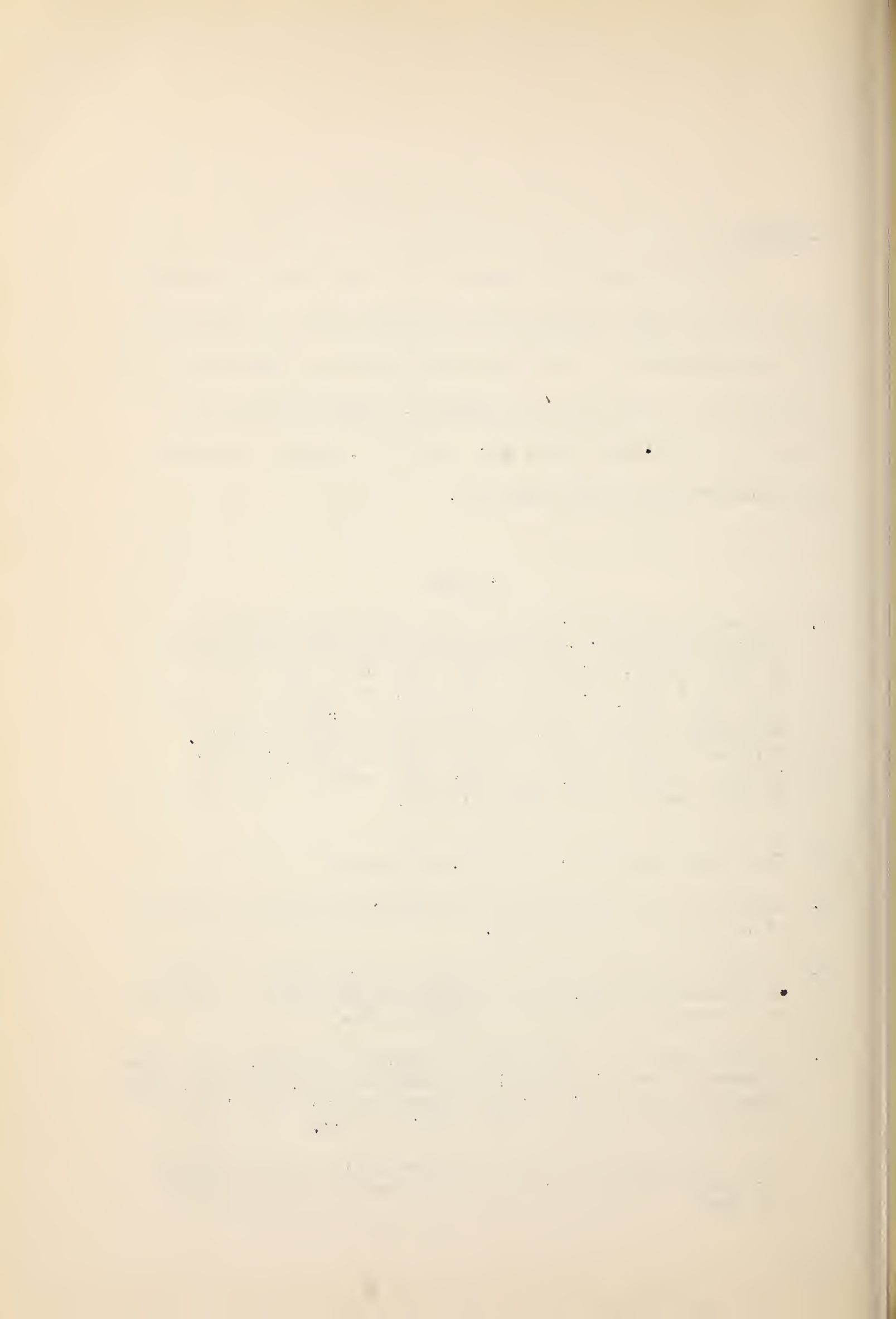


## APPENDIX I

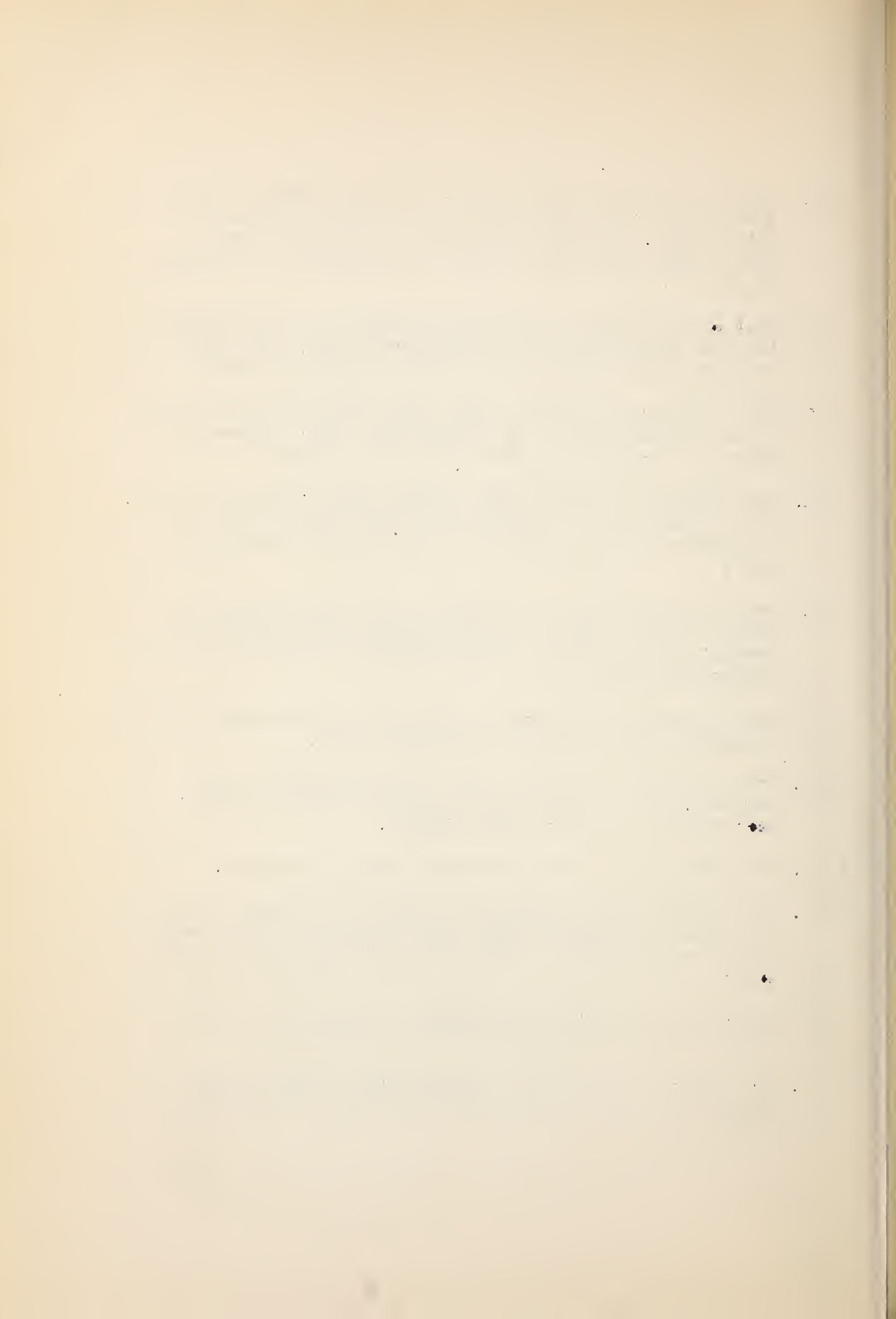
The following is a summary of a study issued by Cooperative Plan of Rural Research between Colorado State Agricultural Experiment Station and Rural Section, Division of Social Research, Works Progress Administration entitled: "Beet Workers on Relief in Weld County, Colorado", by Olaf F. Larson, Colorado State Supervisor of Rural Research.

## SUMMARY

1. A survey was made of 25 per cent of the rural-residing "Spanish-speaking" cases which received emergency relief to Weld County, Colorado at any time during the period February - October, 1935, inclusive, and which had a head whose usual occupation was beet laborer or who took employment at beet labor upon leaving the relief rolls. This sample was composed of 231 cases of which 192 were located as still resident within the county at the time of the survey in the spring of 1936.
2. The average size of case was 5.6 persons.
3. About half the population was in the "dependent" age groups of 15 or less or 65 or over.
4. An average of two workers per case was reported as working or looking for work; over one-third of the entire population were reported as working or seeking work.
5. Average income per case from all sources (excluding the value of certain items furnished) was \$436 for the year March, 1935 - February, 1936; half of this income came from beet labor, 40 per cent was supplied by a public agency.
6. Each case received public assistance during 1935-36 almost six months out of the twelve; the average amount received was \$172.



7. During the period March, 1936 - February, 1937, 70 per cent of the cases were again given public assistance in Weld county; assistance was given an average of over three months out of the twelve and amounted to an average of \$67.
8. Most of the children reported as working in beets during the 1935 season were 14 and 15 years of age; three out of every four persons aged 14 and 15 worked in beets.
9. Beet laborer has been the usual occupation for most of the heads of these cases a relatively long time; six out of every 10 have been so engaged 10 years or more.
10. The employment secured during 1935-36 other than beet labor, and the experience at other occupations during the past five years was practically all some type of agricultural work.
11. Cost of living for cases having two or more persons and which were operated as a household for the full twelve-months' period studied, averaged \$564 per case of \$120 per consumption unit.
12. Food was the most important single item in the cost of living, accounting for one-half of the total costs.
13. Only the group of cases having incomes of \$800 or more managed, on the average, to keep their costs of living for the year less than their income.
14. Dwellings had an average of 2-1/2 persons per room.
15. The English language cannot be used for all three of the practices of reading, writing and speaking by 42 per cent of the males and 55 per cent of the females, aged 16 and over.
16. Practically no school attendance is recorded for persons 16 years of age and over.
17. One person in 10 aged 16 and over has completed eighth grade; one person in 156 aged 16 and over has completed high school.



18. One-fourth of the children aged 6-15, inclusive, had no school attendance record during 1935-36.
19. Grade attainment of children of school age shows great retardation.
20. Males missed an average of 35 days of school out of approximately 180 and females an average of 41 school days, during the 1935-36 term.
21. One case in four came to Weld county after 1929; 90 per cent came after 1919.
22. Mexico and New Mexico have been the chief sources of these cases.
23. A high birth rate is indicated by the ratio of 804 children under the age of 5 per 1000 women aged 15-44 and by the fact that the unbroken families reported an average of 5.3 live births.
24. Infant mortality rates have been high.

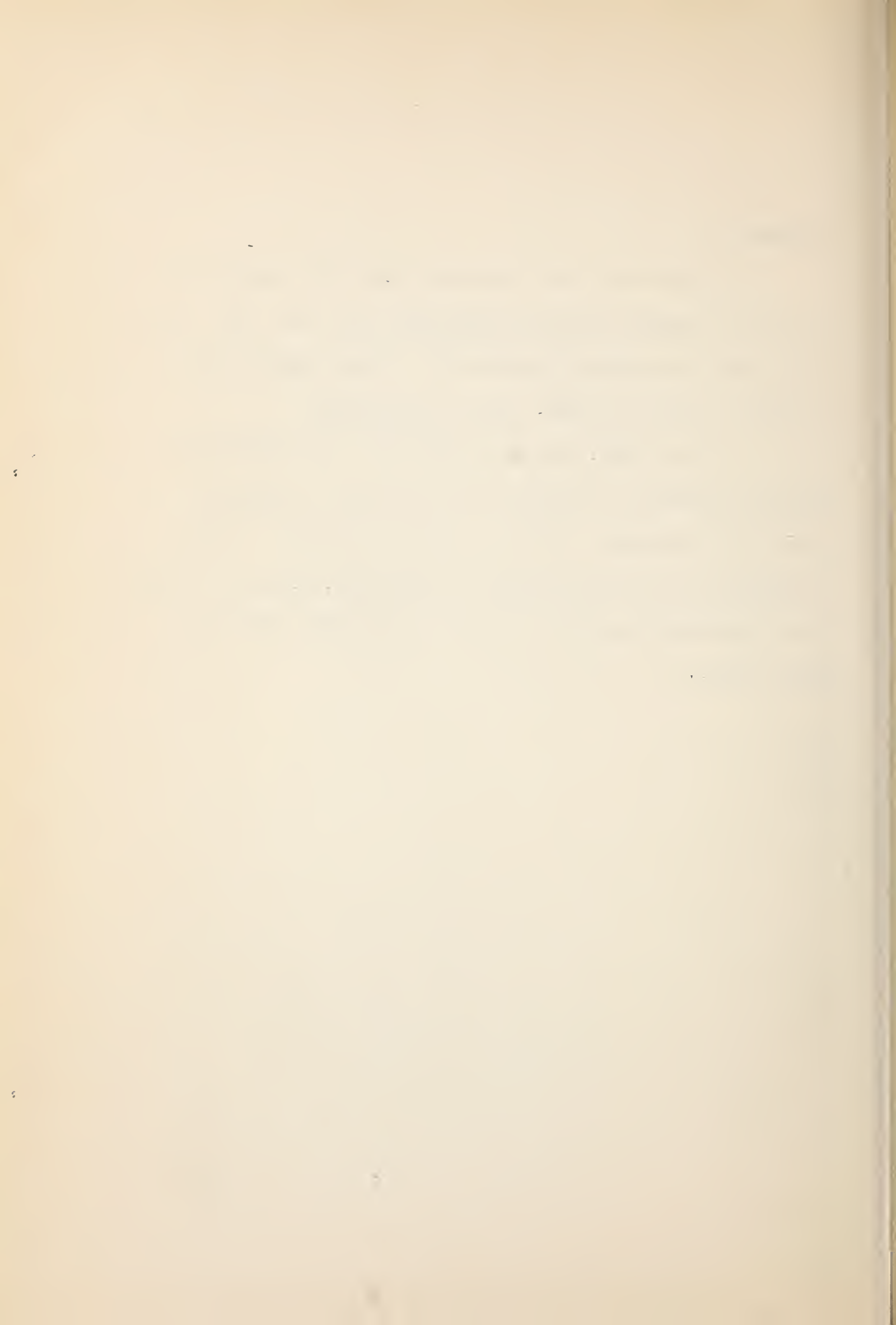




## APPENDIX II

The following is a translated copy of a poster which appeared in Spanish throughout New Mexico in April, 1937. The same poster and similar advertisements are reported to have appeared on the West Coast. (See Appendix III).

In May, 1937, the sugar companies, after conference with the Governor of Colorado and officials of government relief and employment agencies, agreed to withdraw all such advertisements from areas outside of Colorado, since it appeared that a sufficient supply of labor was available within the state itself.



\_\_\_\_\_ N E E D E D \_\_\_\_\_

B E E T    W O R K E R S

In the States of Colorado, Nebraska, Wyoming and Montana; that is, north of Denver, Colorado.

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The contract payment will be higher than it was in 1936. The Secretary of Agriculture has the authority, under a law actually pending before Congress, to fix the contract payment. He fixed the price in 1935, and the workers were well satisfied. You may be certain that the 1937 contract payment will be higher than the 1936 payment.

For the time being, the Colorado Beet Growers Association members are offering the following two contracts:

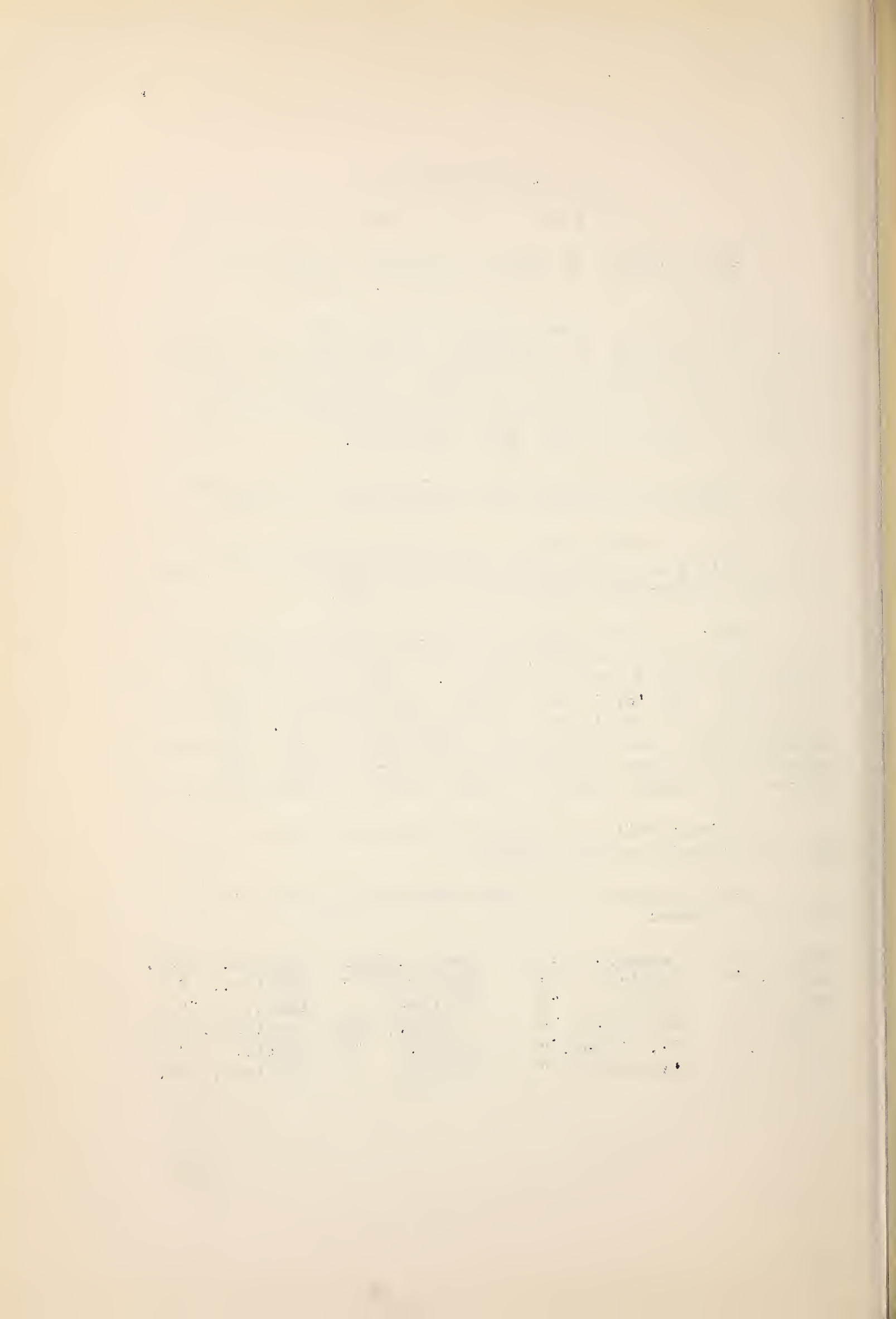
1st: A fixed contract paying \$20.50 per acre for yields of 12 tons per acre and less, plus 65 additional cents for each ton harvested above 12 tons per acre.

2nd: A fixed contract of \$19.50 per acre for yields of 12 tons per acre or less, plus 65 cents additional for each ton harvested above 12 per acre. This proposition of 3 times the price of 1 ton of beets. For example: When the price paid to the beet grower exceeds \$6.50 per ton, the payment to the beet worker will be increased in the following manner: If the grower receives \$7 per ton of beets, the worker will receive \$21.00 per acre, and so on successively.

No rent will be charged for the house occupied by the worker during working season.

This company has 21 sugar factories located in the following places:

Eaton, Colo.	Longmont, Colo.	Brush, Colo.	Mitchell, Nebr.
Greeley, "	Brighton, "	Ft. Morgan "	Minatare, "
Ft. Collins, "	Ovid, "	Scotts-bluff, Nebr.	Lyman, "
Windsor, "	Sterling, "	Gering, "	Wheatland, Wyo.
	Ft. Lupton, "	Bayard, "	Lovell, "
	Loveland, "		Billings, Mont.



Beet work is done by contract and not by the day.

Beet work is very conveniently done by families. Experience is not necessary for this work.

This year workers will not be held back by the Colorado authorities.

We charge nothing for hiring you in our agency office. Food during the trip is also free.

If you wish to make the trip in your own automobile, we will make a monetary concession for that proposal. Said trips should be arranged through our agent. This transportation offer is only good where our agent is recruiting workers, and under all circumstances you must assure yourselves of a letter from the agent of the district where you live.

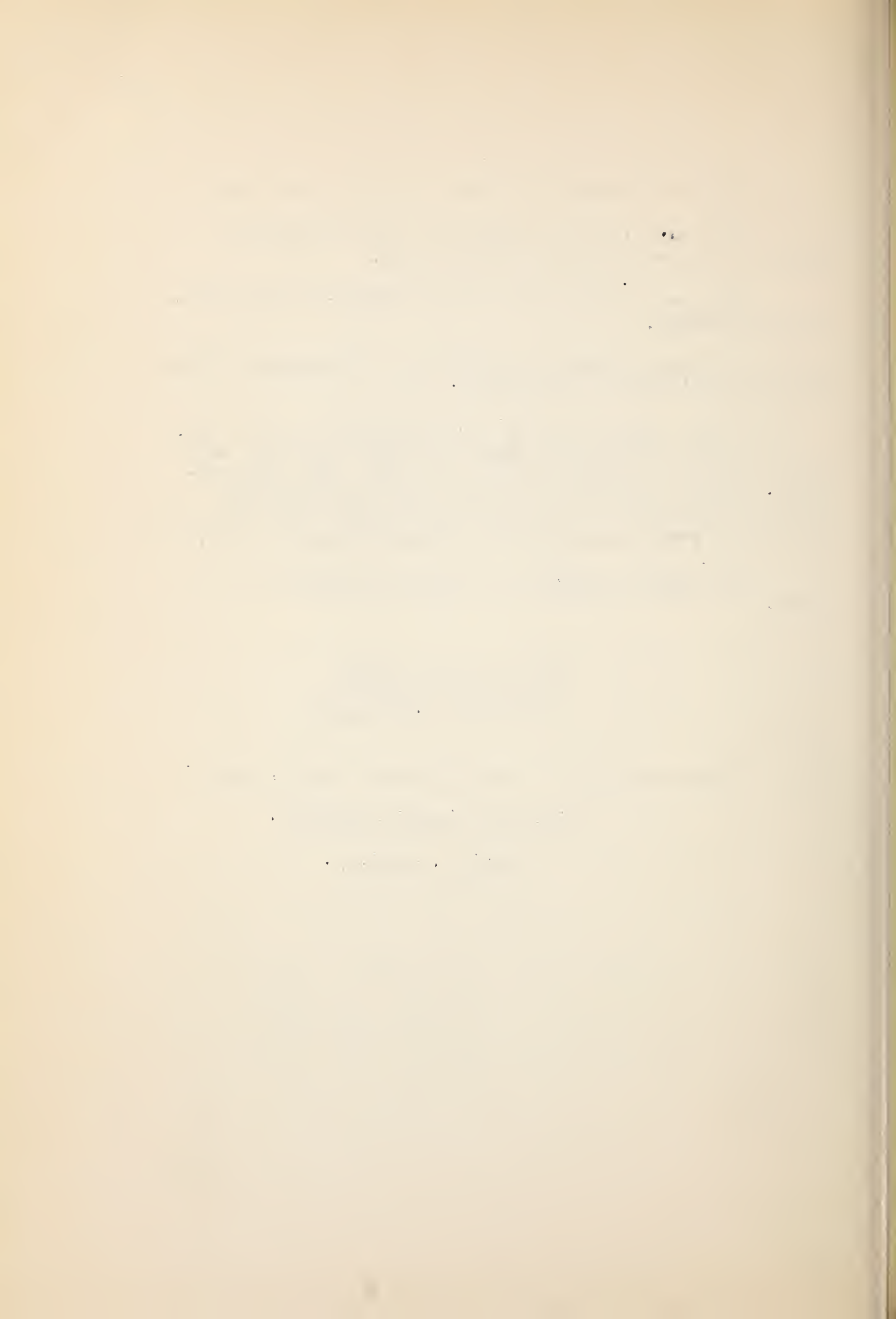
For further information address yourselves to our agent.

Mr. J. A. Des Georges  
313 S. First Street  
Albuquerque, New Mexico

If you cannot get in touch with our agent, write to

THE GREAT WESTERN SUGAR CO.

DENVER, COLORADO.





## APPENDIX III

The following are two newspaper items appearing in the Denver Rocky Mountain News of April 30, 1937 and in the Denver Post of May 1, 1937.



## A M M O N S    M O V E S    T O    B A R A R M Y    O F    B E E T    W O R K E R S

Influx From Other States Threatens; Governor Will Insist  
Men on WPA Rolls Get Jobs; Calls Conference; Handbills  
Invite Labor on Coast to Come to Colorado, Is Learned.

Threat of a heavy immigration of beet workers to Colorado next month caused alarm among state officials this week and Governor Ammons Thursday called a conference of sugar company officials and relief and employment service officers.

The conference will be held Friday morning in the governor's office; Governor Ammons said he would insist on an agreement whereby beet workers would be taken from WPA rolls and drawn entirely from within the state.

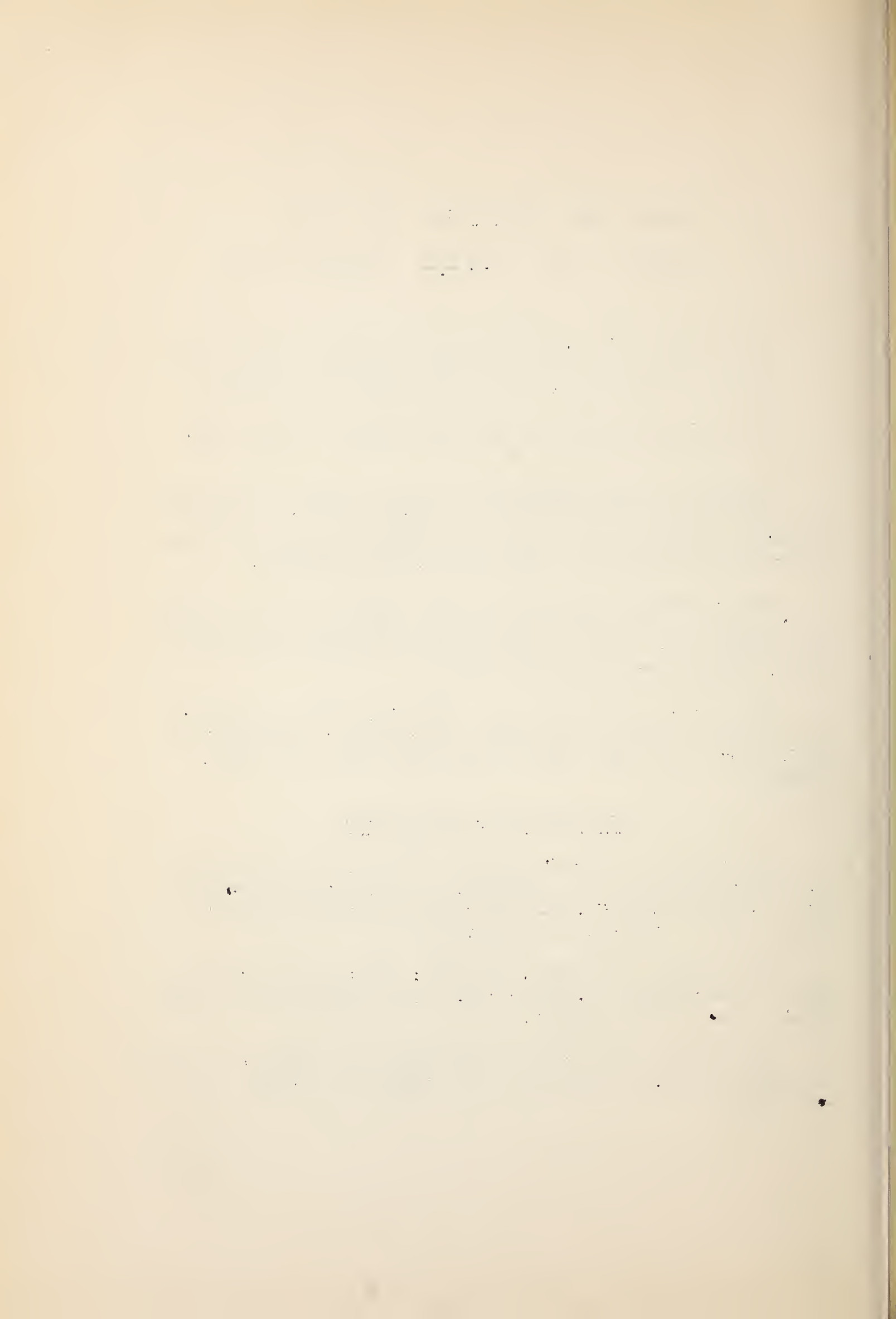
The governor and other state officials fear the importation of beet workers would serve principally to swell relief rolls next winter and, incidentally, keep wages down this summer.

### Bill Calls for Beet Workers

The attorney general's office, it was learned, has been investigating for a week a handbill carrying the name of the Great Western Sugar Co. and allegedly distributed along the West Coast and throughout New Mexico.

The handbill is headed: "Wanted: Beet workers for the Great Western Sugar Co. districts." It advertises that wages "will be more than in 1936".

The handbill says growers of Colorado are offering a fixed contract of \$20.50 an acre up to 12 tons and 65 cents a ton over that.



Mens \$20.50 Month, is Claim

State Federation of Labor officials said one man can care for about seven acres. The contracts cover seven months, which means a man would get about \$20.50 a month. The hand-bill also promises to furnish transportation and to give workers living quarters on which they pay no rent until the end of the season.

Beet workers' unions already in the field are demanding \$25 an acre. They explained before the State Industrial Commission Wednesday their contention the cost of living demands that much. The commission took the case under advisement.

Governor Ammons invited to his conference Frank Kemp, general manager of the Great Western Sugar Co.; Earl M. Kouns, state welfare director; Oscar Wood, state employment service director; Paul D. Shriver, state WPA director, and Amer Lehman, national reemployment service director for Colorado.

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From the Denver Rocky Mountain News, April 30, 1937.





COLORADO BEET WORKERSWILL GET PREFERENCE

Agreement Made at Conference Between Ammons and  
Great Western Sugar Firm.

All available workers for labor in Colorado sugar beet fields will be absorbed before outside labor is permitted to come into the state.

That was agreed upon Friday at a conference between Gov. Teller Ammons, representatives of the Great Western Sugar Company and of the growers and employment agencies.

If workers now on WPA rolls, who are qualified workers for the beet fields, refuse to accept jobs when offered they will be dropped, according to Paul V. Shriver, WPA administrator, who attended the conference.

Senator A. K. Lital, president of the Mountain States Beet Growers Association, said credit would be extended immediately by the growers to all workers who desire to get into the fields now.

Others who attended the conference were Oscar Wood, Colorado state employment service; Amer Lehman, national reemployment service; Earl M. Kouns, director of the state public welfare board; C. V. Maddux, labor representative of the Great Western Sugar company, and M. R. McCrory, direct manager of the company.

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From the Denver Post, May 1, 1937.

